

Michael Hannon, **WMA President**
City of Newark, WMA, EC
Dave Sadoff, **WMA 1st Vice President**
Castro Valley Sanitary District, WMA
Tim Rood, **WMA 2nd Vice President**
City of Piedmont, WMA, EC
Dianne Martinez, **EC President**
City of Emeryville, WMA, EC
Jim Oddie, **EC 1st Vice President**
City of Alameda, WMA, EC
Deborah Cox, **EC 2nd Vice President**
City of San Leandro, WMA, EC
Keith Carson, County of Alameda, WMA, EC
Peter Maass, City of Albany, WMA, EC
Jesse Arreguin, City of Berkeley, WMA, EC
Don Biddle, City of Dublin, WMA, EC
Vinnie Bacon, City of Fremont, WMA, EC
Sara Lamnin, City of Hayward, WMA, EC
Bob Carling, City of Livermore, WMA, EC
Dan Kalb, City of Oakland, WMA, EC
Shelia Young, Oro Loma Sanitary District, WMA
Jerry Pentin, City of Pleasanton, WMA, EC
Lorin Ellis, City of Union City, WMA, EC

Wendy Sommer, Executive Director

AGENDA

MEETING OF THE ALAMEDA COUNTY WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (WMA) BOARD AND THE ENERGY COUNCIL (EC)

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

3:00 P.M.

**StopWaste Offices
1537 Webster Street
Oakland, CA 94612
510-891-6500**

Meeting is wheelchair accessible. Sign language interpreter may be available upon five (5) days notice by calling 510-891-6500. Members of the public wanting to add an item to a future agenda may contact 510-891-6500.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL OF ATTENDANCE

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY PRESIDENTS - *(Members are asked to please advise the board or the council if you might need to leave before action items are completed)*

IV. OPEN PUBLIC DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

An opportunity is provided for any member of the public wishing to speak on any matter within the jurisdiction of the boards or council, but not listed on the agenda. Total time limit of 30 minutes with each speaker limited to three minutes unless a shorter period of time is set by the President.

Page V. CONSENT CALENDAR

- 1 **1. Approval of the Draft Minutes of October 25, 2017 (Wendy Sommer)**

VI. REGULAR CALENDAR

- 7 **1. Stop Food Waste Campaign (Cassie Bartholomew)**
This item is for information only.
- 9 **2. Community Based Outreach Project (Jeanne Nader)**
This item is for information only.

3. Interim appointment(s) to the Recycling Board for WMA appointee unable to attend future Board Meeting(s) (Wendy Sommer)

(Planning Committee and Recycling Board meeting, December 14, 2017 at 4:00 pm, StopWaste Offices, 1537 Webster Street, Oakland, CA)

4. CLOSED SESSION

CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL—EXISTING LITIGATION – 2 Cases

(Government Code section 54956.9(d)(1))

Name of case: A.W. Stein & A.R. Boone v. Alameda County Waste Management Authority
(Alameda County Superior Court Case No. RG17858423)

Name of case: Waste Connections, Inc. v. Alameda County Waste Management Authority
(Kings County Superior Court Case No. 16-C0022)

VII. MEMBER COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

DRAFT

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ALAMEDA COUNTY WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (WMA)
AND
THE ENERGY COUNCIL (EC)**

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

3:00 P.M.

**StopWaste Offices
1537 Webster Street
Oakland, CA 94612
510-891-6500**

Teleconference

**Tim Rood
San Jose City Hall
3rd Floor Tower
200 East Santa Clara St
San Jose CA 95113
(408) 535-8122**

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Mike Hannon, WMA, called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL OF ATTENDANCE

WMA & EC:

City of Alameda	Jim Oddie, WMA, EC
City of Albany	Peter Maass, WMA, EC
Castro Valley Sanitary District	Dave Sadoff, WMA
City of Dublin	Don Biddle, WMA, EC
City of Emeryville	Dianne Martinez, WMA, EC
City of Hayward	Francisco Zermeno, WMA, EC
City of Livermore	Bob Carling, WMA, EC
City of Oakland	Dan Kalb, WMA, EC
Oro Loma Sanitary District	Shelia Young, WMA
City of Piedmont	Tim Rood, WMA, EC (teleconference)
City of Pleasanton	Jerry Pentin, WMA, EC
City of San Leandro	Deborah Cox, WMA, EC
City of Newark	Mike Hannon, WMA, EC

ABSENT:

County of Alameda	Keith Carson, WMA, EC
City of Berkeley	Jesse Arreguin, WMA, EC
City of Fremont	Vinnie Bacon, WMA, EC
City of Union City	Lorin Ellis, WMA, EC

Staff Participating:

Wendy Sommer, Executive Director
Tom Padia, Deputy Executive Director
Angelina Vergara, Program Manager
Richard Taylor, WMA Legal Counsel
Arliss Dunn, Clerk of the Board

Others Participating:

Michael Peltz, Waste Management Recycling America and Recycling Board Member
Evan Edgar, Edgar & Associates
Students from Castro Valley High School's SMART Environmental Club
Dr. Deborah Yager, Advisor of the Smart Environmental Club
Arthur Boone

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY PRESIDENTS

There were none.

IV. OPEN PUBLIC DISCUSSION FROM THE FLOOR

An opportunity is provided for any member of the public wishing to speak on any matter within the jurisdiction of the boards or council, but not listed on the agenda. Total time limit of 30 minutes with each speaker limited to three minutes.

Arthur Boone provided public comment. Mr. Boone commented regarding his concerns with mixed-waste processing of materials and with the possible safety concerns of processing 1,000 tons of organics at the Davis Street OMRF and the potential for methane explosions. Evan Edgar provided public comment in support of the Davis Street OMRF and anaerobic digestion in general, stating that it is a proven technology with a proven safety record.

V. CONSENT CALENDAR

- 1. Approval of the Draft Minutes of September 27, 2017 (Wendy Sommer)**
- 2. Alameda County Operational Area Emergency Management Organization (Meghan Starkey)**
That the WMA Board adopt the attached Resolution to Join the Alameda County Operational Area Agreement.

There was no public comment for the consent calendar. Board member Biddle made the motion to approve the consent calendar. Board member Pentin seconded and the motion carried 15-0: (Ayes: Biddle, Carling, Cox, Hannon, Kalb, Maass, Martinez, Oddie, Pentin, Rood, Sadoff, Young, Zermeno. Nays: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Arreguin, Bacon, Carson, Ellis).

VI. REGULAR CALENDAR

- 1. Executive Director Contract Amendment (President Michael Hannon)**
That the Waste Management Authority Board amend the Executive Director Employment Agreement with an increase of five percent effective the pay period starting September 24, 2017.

President Hannon thanked Board members Kalb, Rood, and Sadoff for their assistance in conducting the performance evaluation of the Executive Director and invited the Board to review the confidential memos provided to them at the meeting. President Hannon stated that one of the items is a memo from the evaluation team thanking the Executive Director for doing a tremendous job this year and commending her

for an outstanding performance. President Hannon stated the evaluation team was pleased with the willingness of Ms. Sommer to provide a 360 type evaluation, including input regarding her performance from current and former employees, whose comments were glowing. President Hannon added that staff comments indicated that they recognized the hard work by Ms. Sommer and appreciate the direction that this Board is heading. President Hannon stated that the packet also includes a memo from Ms. Sommer that outline her priorities for the coming year.

There were no public comments on this item. Board member Young thanked the evaluation team for their work and stated that contacting former employees was a good idea and was pleased to hear that they provided a glowing account of her performance. Ms. Sommer thanked the evaluation team for a meaningful process and thanked the Board for their continued trust and confidence in leading the agency and having the Boards' unanimous support for the important work that the agency is doing.

Board member Young made the motion to amend the Executive Director Employment Agreement with an increase of five percent effective the pay period starting September 24, 2017. Board member Biddle seconded and the motion carried 15-0: (Ayes: Biddle, Carling, Cox, Hannon, Kalb, Maass, Martinez, Oddie, Pentin, Rood, Sadoff, Young, Zermeno. Nays: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Arreguin, Bacon, Carson, Ellis).

2. Rules of Procedure: Changes from Programs & Administration Committee (Wendy Sommer)

That the Board decide whether to replace Robert's Rules of Order with Rosenberg's as the Board parliamentary rules and adopt the revisions to the WMA Board Rules of Procedure.

Wendy Sommer provided an overview of the staff report. The report is available here: [WMA-Rules-of-Procedure-10-25-17.pdf](#)

Ms. Sommer thanked Board members Sadoff and Young for their assistance in finalizing the report. Board member Kalb asked about the differences between Robert's Rules of Order and Rosenberg's Rules of Order. Board member Young stated that Rosenberg's was developed by a California Superior Court Judge to simplify the rules for the public and for larger agencies to follow. WMA Counsel Richard Taylor stated that there are no substantial changes to the rules. Rosenberg distilled all the principles of Robert's Rules into a simple document.

Board member Young made the motion to approve the staff recommendation. Board member Cox seconded and the motion carried 15-0: (Ayes: Biddle, Carling, Cox, Hannon, Kalb, Maass, Martinez, Oddie, Pentin, Rood, Sadoff, Young, Zermeno. Nays: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Arreguin, Bacon, Carson, Ellis).

3. Recycling Markets Update (Tom Padia)

This item is for information only.

Tom Padia provided an overview of the staff report and introduced Michael Peltz, Waste Management Recycling America and Recycling Board Member and Evan Edgar, Edgar & Associates. Board member Peltz and Mr. Edgar discussed current dynamics, trends and impacts of China's National Sword scrap import policies, and what, if anything, local governments and haulers can do to help their recycling programs survive and thrive in the times ahead. Board member Peltz presented a PowerPoint presentation. A link to the combined staff report and presentation is available here: [Recycling-Markets-Presentation-10-25-17.pdf](#)

Board member Sadoff inquired about what happens to the waste stream that is refused by certain MRFs. Board member Peltz stated that some MRFs are more willing to take contaminated waste streams and some of those materials are going into the landfill. Board member Cox inquired if waste from the west coast has a market in other parts of the country. Board member Peltz stated that there are more developed paper mills in other parts of the country and historically California has not been a center of paper production. However, the Pacific Northwest, with the wood processing industry, has a more significant

paper production industry but they have their own local market. Board member Peltz added it is not supported economically to ship to the East Coast. Board member Maass inquired if there are plastics or paper that if they were eliminated from the system would greatly cutback on the contamination of the different waste streams, i.e. legislate that certain types of plastic that were objectionable were disallowed from the waste stream. Board member Peltz responded probably no with regard to paper because recycling paper is pretty clear cut. The challenges encountered are in producing a quality pack regardless of the grade of waste paper. Plastic is a problem with respect to packaging and incorporating resins that have to be sorted and end users of resins want them to be very clean. Board member Maass inquired if the manufacturers in China that are now being told to shut down or refuse these materials are making any efforts to offshore their production plans to other parts of Asia or in the United States. Board member Peltz stated yes, due to the current regulatory environment and the shift in priorities in China, many Chinese manufacturers are taking a hard look at expanding their production outside of mainland China.

Evan Edgar provided a brief presentation describing the declining recycling rate in California over the past few years, the negative impact of a sharp decline in recycling exports, and the need for higher landfill tip fees and more funding for the state to invest in diversion infrastructure.

President Hannon suspended the presentation to accommodate the schedule of the student participants. The presentation was continued after item VI. 4

Board member Kalb expressed concern and inquired as to any actions that the agency could take. Mr. Edgar state that he is working with Justin Malan, StopWaste lobbyist, to introduce a tip fee bill that would increase the tip fee to reinvest in recycling capacity statewide, provide upgrades to equipment, implement optical technology, etc. Board member Kalb stated that he considers that the US can adhere to China's new stricter standards but with respect to reduced quotas inquired about the other possible markets around the world. Board member Peltz stated that while there are other markets in Asia, they are not growing fast enough to offset what we speculate might be the reduction in Chinese demand. Board member Carling if National Sword is surprising to the industry. Mr. Edgar stated no, in 2013 the green fence went up and since 2013 the amount of export material has declined from 27 million tons to 15 million tons last year. We have been trying to keep up with demand but the landfills are filling up with mixed paper, and some smaller recyclers may go out of business. Board member Young inquired about AB 1288. Mr. Edgar stated that AB 1288 (Eggman) was introduced in 2017 as a spot bill for tip fee reform but became a two year bill. Californians Against Waste is a sponsor and the Compost Coalition is a strong supporter of the bill and we hope to set hearings to get the fee increase. Board member Young inquired if the bill passed would it be statewide. Mr. Edgar stated yes, the money would go into the Integrated Waste Management Fund and CalRecycle would distribute the funds back into the recycling infrastructure. President Hannon thanked Board member Peltz and Mr. Edgar for their presentation and added he appreciates the comments made with respect to what we can do in our own communities to increase the amount of good recyclables to ensure that the products that we are shipping abroad or recycling at home are better products.

4. Schools Program Overview (Angelina Vergara)

This item is for information only.

Angelina Vergara provided an overview of the staff report and presented a PowerPoint presentation. The combined report and presentation is available here: [Schools-Presentation-10-25-17.pdf](#)

Ms. Vergara introduced the StopWaste Schools program staff: Arielle Conway, Audrey Lin, Hugo Gregoire, Dylan Thompson, Cristian Aguilar, Ben Schleifer, Nora Dennehy, and Jamie Andrade. Ms. Vergara also introduced students from the Castro Valley High School SMART Environmental Club and their advisor, Dr. Deborah Yager. The StopWaste Schools staff provided an overview of the schools program and the students

provided an overview of how they have applied learnings from the StopWaste Schools Program into their sustainability efforts.

Board member Zermeno inquired if there is funding to help support the program. Ms. Sommer stated that we have grant programs and other programs that we can discuss at a later time. Board member Sadoff stated that the Castro Valley Sanitary District is very proud of the students' efforts. The high school is now a green ribbon and green hearts school and the district has funding to award those programs. Board member Sadoff added the district will be presenting awards to the Castro Valley Unified School District tomorrow night for recycling activities over the past year. President Hannon thanked the students for their presentation and commended them on being the future environmental leaders and encouraged them to pass on the important lessons that they have learned to other students as well as the community. Ms. Vergara recognized the StopWaste Food Waste program staff Cassie Bartholomew, Anna Lisa Bellis, and Maricelle Cardenas.

5. Interim appointment(s) to the Recycling Board for WMA appointee unable to attend future Board Meeting(s) (Wendy Sommer)

(Planning Committee and Recycling Board meeting, November 9, 2017 at 7:00 pm, Hayward City Hall, 777 B Street, Hayward, CA 94541)

Mr. Padia reported to the Board that staff raised the possibility of changing the Board meeting time from 4 p.m. to 3 p.m. with the Recycling Board. However, due to the current members' schedules and strict attendance requirements, the meeting time cannot be adjusted.

Board members Rood and Pentin requested interim appointments for the November 9, 2017 meeting. Board members Biddle and Young volunteered to attend as the interim appointments. Board member Cox made the motion to accept the interim appointments. Board member Sadoff seconded and the motion carried 14-0: (Ayes: Biddle, Carling, Cox, Hannon, Kalb, Maass, Martinez, Oddie, Rood, Sadoff, Young, Zermeno. Nays: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Arreguin, Bacon, Carson, Ellis, Pentin).

VII. COMMUNICATION/MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Sommer announced that the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting minutes will now appear in the back of the agenda packet because the TAG is not a committee under the Brown Act and the minutes are provided for information only.

Ms. Sommer announced that staff will be presenting one-page topic briefs from this point forward to keep the Board informed of current issues in our field. The topic brief presented today profiles mattress recycling. Ms. Sommer asked the Board to inform staff if this is a useful tool. President Hannon thanked staff for the topic brief and stated that it is important to keep the Board informed about current issues in our field. Board member Oddie thanked staff for the one-page topic brief and announced that the city of Alameda had recently passed an on-demand straw ban and also increased their requirements for compostable materials in restaurants. Board member Oddie recognized Maria DiMeglio, city of Alameda staff, to answer any questions. Ms. Sommer added that in response to a request by a Board member, staff will be bringing an item to the Board on straws in December.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

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DATE: November 15, 2017

TO: Waste Management Authority Board

FROM: Wendy Sommer, Executive Director

BY: Cassie Bartholomew, Program Manager

SUBJECT: Stop Food Waste Campaign

SUMMARY

Food remains the largest component (18.7% by weight) of the waste stream in Alameda County. Through its Food Waste Reduction project, StopWaste is working to reduce wasted food through multiple channels including industrial kitchens, school cafeterias and households. The project's goals and activities are in alignment with the Board-adopted guiding principles, with an emphasis on upstream activities (i.e. waste prevention) over management of discarded food.

The newest element of this project is the Stop Food Waste outreach campaign, which is geared to a residential audience with the aim of reducing food waste at home. At the November 15 WMA meeting, staff will present an overview of the campaign, including outreach materials, strategies, and activities to date.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.

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DATE: November 15, 2017

TO: Waste Management Authority Board

FROM: Wendy Sommer, Executive Director

BY: Jeanne Nader, Program Manager

SUBJECT: Community Based Outreach Project

SUMMARY

For years, StopWaste has conducted in-person outreach to communities throughout Alameda County. This year a new project, Community Based Outreach, was created to:

- Consolidate oversight and training so staff have a coordinated approach to outreach using best practices, and are consistent with messaging
- Focus our community outreach efforts on Agency priorities based on the guiding principles adopted by the Board, in particular organics and upstream activities (i.e. waste prevention)
- Coordinate and leverage opportunities with other internal efforts such as Grants to Nonprofits.

At the November 15 WMA meeting, staff will provide an overview of the Community Based Outreach Project and identify opportunities for Board members to participate as agency ambassadors in community level outreach for priority issues.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.

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**December 2017
Meetings Schedule**

Alameda County Waste Management Authority, The Energy Council, & Source Reduction and Recycling Board

(Meetings are held at StopWaste Offices unless otherwise noted)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 9:00 AM Programs & Administration Committee 1. Midyear contract naming and revised authorized position list 2. Packaging update 3. Class study comparators <hr/> 4:00 PM Planning Committee & Recycling Board StopWaste Offices Key Items: 1. Election of Officers 2. 2018 Meeting Schedule 3. Midyear changes (if any) 4. Alameda County GSA – RPPP/EPP 5. Packaging update 6. Quarterly cash report	15	16
17	18	19	20 3:00 PM WMA Board & Energy Council Key Items: 1. 2018 Legislative platform 2. Report on straws 3. EC Rules of Procedure 4. Meeting Schedule 5. Midyear 6. Quarterly cash report	21	22 AGENCY HOLIDAY	23
24	25 AGENCY HOLIDAY	26	27	28	29	30
31						

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A truck dumps compost materials inside a receiving area at the Cedar Grove processing facility near Seattle, Washington. // Elaine Thompson/AP

How Much Food Do Cities Squander?

JESSICA LEIGH HESTER OCT 25, 2017

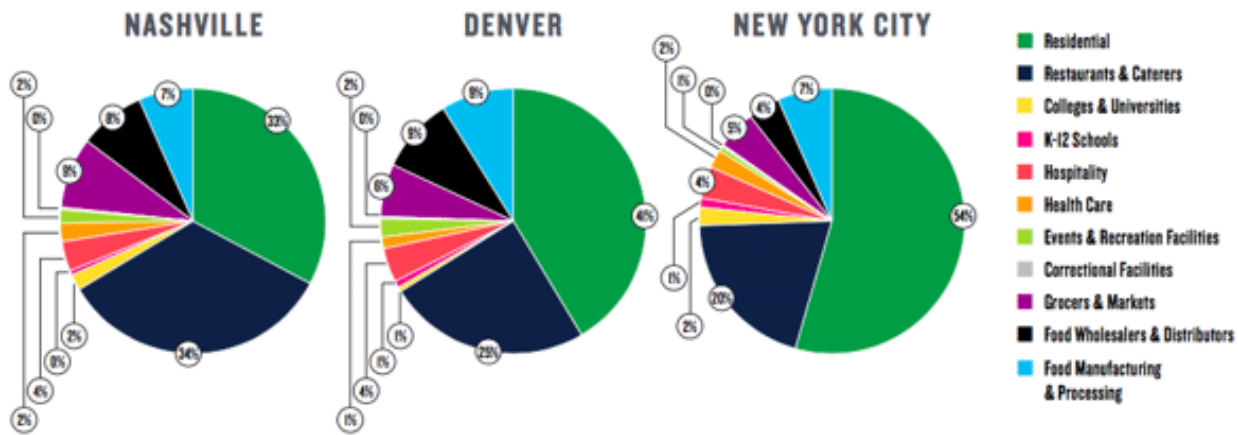
Researchers have unearthed the wasteful habits of households and businesses in Nashville, Denver, and New York—and created a blueprint for curbing them.

Last winter, teams of researchers in three U.S. cities donned goggles, gloves, and respirators, tore into bags of other people's household garbage, and then pawed through the contents. Separating slimy banana peels from clumps of coffee grounds was dirty work, but it had a laudable goal: trying to get a handle on how much food waste could have been consumed or diverted before winding its way into the waste stream with a one-way ticket to the dump.

The problems associated with urban food waste are no mystery. Proof of the problem is everywhere, in overflowing garbage bins and grime-slicked compost caddies. Food scraps contribute to the already sizable piles of refuse that cities must haul to landfills; shuttling edible castoffs to people in need requires labyrinthine routes and mind-boggling logistics; and gases released by decomposing leftovers detract from cities' work toward reining in emissions. But there's surprisingly little hard data about who's wasting what, and where, which makes it harder for cities to address the issue.

To sniff out specifics, the engineering company Tetra Tech (in collaboration with the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Rockefeller Foundation) recruited more than 1,151 residents in Denver, New York, and Nashville. Of these, 631 supplied qualitative info in the form of kitchen diaries noting what they tossed and why. Researchers also inspected the contents of 277 residential trash bins, and 145 containers of commercial or industrial garbage.

Now, the team has digested the data in a pair of reports, released today, that take stock of how food waste shakes out in these cities, and what they can do to clean up their act.



Proportion of wasted food by sector (NRDC)

The researchers divided trashed food into three categories: stuff that is typically edible, questionably edible (including peels and cores), and inedible (such as pits, bones, and egg shells). They then tallied up findings from the bin digs and kitchen diaries to gauge how much is going to waste in each city. In Denver and New York, residents trashed the majority of the wasted food; in Nashville, the residential and restaurant sectors were neck and neck.

Denverites trashed the most edible food—about 7.5 pounds per household each week—followed by New York (5.4 pounds) and then Nashville (4.6 pounds).

Overall, these sums are lower than previous estimates from ReFED, a consortium of food-centric organizations, which placed the weekly figure around 11.6 pounds per household.

Across all three cities, coffee and grounds were the goods most often pitched in the trash, trailed by bananas (in Nashville and New York) and chicken (in Denver). Apples, bread, oranges, and potatoes also topped the list, as did discarded dairy products.

TABLE II: TOTAL FOOD WASTED BY TYPE (INCLUDES TYPICALLY EDIBLE, QUESTIONABLY EDIBLE, AND INEDIBLE)			
RANK	NASHVILLE	DENVER	NYC
1	Coffee (including liquid coffee and grounds)	Coffee (including liquid coffee and grounds)	Coffee (including liquid coffee and grounds)
2	Banana	Chicken	Banana
3	Chicken	Milk	Chicken
4	Egg	Banana	Orange
5	Milk	Bread	Apple
6	Apple	Potato	Potato
7	Bread	Apple	Bread
8	Squash	Egg	Soup
9	Sauce (various condiments and sauces)	Soup	Milk
10	Potato	Pork	Rice

Types of food wasted by city. (NRDC)

In the accompanying kitchen diaries, respondents described why they opted to jettison these scraps. Forty-four percent of participants said they were getting rid of inedible portions; 20 percent reported moldy or spoiled food, and 11 percent indicated they weren't interested in the leftovers. Only 4 percent of residents noted that they'd discarded food because it was past the date printed on the label, though perceived confusion over inscrutable labeling practices has spurred legislation to standardize and streamline "best by" and "use by" language.

The reports also qualified attitudes toward waste. Most respondents preferred fruit without blemishes; still, more than half of the respondents said they "always" or "mostly" excised bruised portions and salvaged the rest of the fruit or vegetable. And though some indicated that squandering food felt morally icky, 58 percent of the respondents indicated less guilt about wasting food if they knew it was going to be composted.

Judging by the kitchen diaries, though, most of the trashed food didn't end up in the compost bin—53 percent went straight to the trash. In New York, which has a comparatively robust organics scheme, 37 percent of the self-reported discards ended up in the green bin. In Denver and Nashville, this figure was 24 percent and 28 percent, respectively, though respondents in Denver reported the highest rate of compost participation.

The researchers flag that discrepancy, among other sticking points: At least in New York City, they found that participating in a compost program led to more overall waste, compared with families whose garbage all goes into a single stream. In other words: Compost-happy residents were disposing of more total scraps than residents who just threw the whole lot in the trash. To counter that trend, the report's authors recommend reminding consumers that "preventing food waste is preferable to composting it."

Recommended



Is Garbage a Product of Bad Design?

JESSICA
LEIGH
HESTER
OCT 19,
2017



The Wisdom of Garbage

JESSICA
LEIGH
HESTER
FEB 15,
2017



Saving Your Home From Food Waste, One Graying Avocado at a Time

JESSICA
LEIGH
HESTER
AUG 23,
2017

All this surplus food could be put to better use. "An outrageous amount of food is wasted in our cities, yet at the same time many residents are in need," said Dana Gunders, a senior scientist at NRDC, in a statement. The other new report documents the ways that cities can push back against hunger and food insecurity, which continue to nag cities, suburbs, and rural regions despite the excess of edible food. Some 13.4 percent of Tennessee residents are food insecure, according to a 2016 report from the USDA. Across New York State, that figure is 12.5 percent; in Colorado, 10.3 percent of citizens struggle to reliably access nutritious food.

The NRDC researchers compared current food rescue rates in the three cities to the maximum volume that could be intercepted, and found that it's feasible to recoup tens of thousands of tons of packaged, raw, or prepared items across the board, from grocery stores, restaurants, caterers, coffee shops, schools, and more. In Denver, where 2,539 tons of food is currently rescued along the food chain, the researchers pinpoint an additional untapped potential of 4,232 tons—enough for about 7.1 million meals. These could go a long way in a city where nearly about 13 percent of residents lack reliable access to nutritious food.

But that goal is a lofty one: It assumes that all of the local businesses and institutions will buy in. The researchers also spooled up a less ambitious projection, in which participation rates are more modestly scaled up from their current numbers. That model would still translate to 901 tons of food, or 1.5 million meals—but it could require an infusion of \$2 million to cover the cost of vehicles and storage space to accommodate the haul.

More than a prescription, the research is a starting point. “As more research in this vein is conducted, it will be easier to identify trends and potentially aggregate data for better extrapolation, better intervention design—and eventually, less wasted food,” the authors note. Urban areas can carry this charge, Gunders told me last year. “Cities can be setting targets in their community, and elevating the profile of the issue and raising awareness,” she said. “That’s a nice foundation. They can take a look at their waste policies.”

Cities can also redesign trash management from the ground up. As I wrote last week, a band of architects in New York, backed by the Center for Architecture and the Rockefeller Foundation, laid out a series of design guidelines that approach trash as a design issue, and turn to clever planning and ingenious interiors to help alleviate the burden while getting the city closer to Mayor Bill de Blasio’s goal of schlepping zero waste to landfills by 2030. That call for better engineering is echoed in some of the qualitative feedback in the NRDC reports. When asked what sorts of steps they hope their cities will take, most respondents gestured toward expanded compost programs or beefed-up public service campaigns.

Others asked for more options, arrayed in a smarter and more durable way. “Make it easier to compost and recycle,” one participant wrote. “Like many NYCers, I live in a small place and mice and cockroaches come up often. That means we keep our trash on a specific counter. Since we have to already split up our paper recycling, and have trash, there is no room for four bins!!! When we lived in San Francisco and we could throw all recycling in one bin, we composted a lot more often.”

Far from being a luxury, “design thinking is something people should demand from cities, architects, and supers,” said Benjamin Prosky, executive director of the Center for Architecture, at an event announcing the waste-reduction blueprint. Collecting, digesting, and acting upon ever-more-precise data can only sharpen its focus and impact.

About the Author



Jessica Leigh Hester

🐦 [@JESSICAHESTER](#) / 📡 [FEED](#)

Jessica Leigh Hester is a senior associate editor at CityLab, covering environment and culture. Her work also appears in the *New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *New York Times*, *Modern Farmer*, *Village Voice*, *Slate*, BBC, NPR, and other outlets.



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